

Votes for Women

Three generations of women fought to overcome objections and convince the male voters who would decide the issue that women had the right to vote. Opponents claimed that woman suffrage would lead to neglected children, masculine women, confused gender roles, and prohibition. Suffragists and supporters countered with images of strong but feminine voters with years of experience and contributions as mothers, homemakers, breadwinners, and community activists.



Woman suffrage wagon, 1870s–1920

Tradition says that early suffragists used this delivery wagon at speaking engagements and to distribute the suffrage magazine *Woman's Journal*. Later suffragists painted the wagon with slogans and continued to use it for rallies and publicity, as well as magazine sales.

Gift of New Hampshire Historical Society

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A Suffrage Symbol



The Declaration of Sentiments table

Gift of National American Woman Suffrage Association

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In the early 1800s women were culturally and legally subordinated to men. While more men were gaining the right to vote, women were still barred from the ballot box. In 1848 a group led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton called a convention on women's rights. On this table they drafted a Declaration of Sentiments. Based on the Declaration of Independence, it demanded reforms to women's legal status. The most daring was the right to vote. It took decades of fighting for rights to their children, property, money, education, and employment and successfully leading national reform movements before they convinced a majority of American men that women also had a right to the ballot.

The table on which Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted the Declaration of Sentiments became an icon for woman suffragists and was displayed at national meetings. In 1919, as state legislatures voted on the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, leaders of the National American Woman Suffrage Association brought the table to the Smithsonian Institution to claim their place in the official history of the nation. The table has become a three-dimensional evocation of the struggle, achievement, and pride of the early woman's movement and ranks as one of the treasures of the Smithsonian.



The Declaration of Sentiments table on display in the 1920s

The “Great Demand”

Banners proclaiming the “Great Demand” for woman suffrage were used in demonstrations and rallies from 1913 until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Marie Gilmer Louthan carried this one in suffrage parades.



Woman suffrage banner

Gift of Martin Gilmer Louthan family in honor of Marie Gilmer Louthan

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Badge, "Votes for Women"

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Woman suffrage buttons

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Lapel pennant, "Votes For Women"

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Suffragists often used humor to point out the absurdity of some of the common objections to women voting.



Woman suffrage "Objection" banner
Gift of Alice Paul Centennial Foundation Inc.

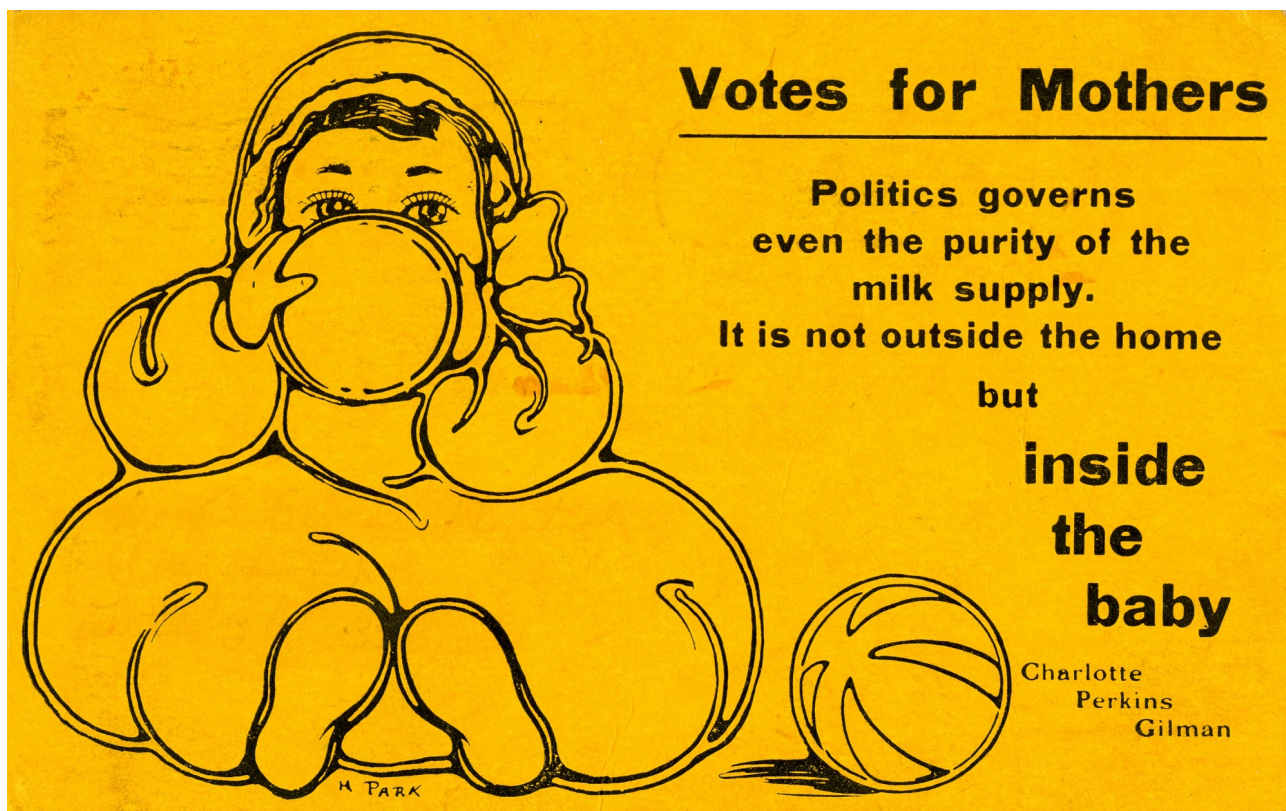
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Woman suffrage "Answer" banner

Gift of Alice Paul Centennial Foundation Inc.

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Woman suffrage postcard
Gift of Edna L. Stantial

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Woman suffrage postcard

Gift of Edna L. Stantial

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Woman suffrage postcard

Gift of Edna L. Stantial

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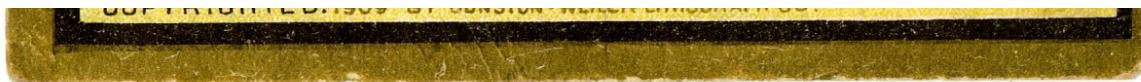
SUFFRAGETTE SERIES No II.

EVERYBODY
WORKS BUT
MOTHER:
SHE'S A
SUFFRAGETTE



I WANT TO VOTE, BUT
MY·WIFE·WONT·LET·ME

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Anti-Woman suffrage postcard

Gift of Edna L. Stantial

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Anti-woman suffrage figurine
Gift of Edna L. Stantial

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WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

If, instead of ranting of Woman's Rights,
You tried to look after some poor, sickly mites,
And talk of their rights, long, strong and loud,
If, instead of ranting of Woman's Rights,
You tried to look after some poor, sickly mites,
And talk of their rights, long, strong and loud,

You would then be a woman of whom we d be proud

Anti-Woman suffrage postcard

Gift of Edna L. Stantial

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State by State

Members of the National American Woman Suffrage Association organized statewide “Votes for Women” campaigns. They used buttons, signs, and gimmicks like the ring parade spinner to promote their cause and tracked their progress with maps and stars representing their victories. The western states were the first to accept women as voters.



Woman suffrage postcard

Gift of Marjorie R. Longwell

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Woman suffrage fan
 Transfer from Library of Congress

[View object record </collections/nmah_516788>](#)



Woman suffrage parade spinner

Loan from Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University



Woman suffrage bluebird sign

Transfer from Library of Congress

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Woman suffrage buttons

Transfer from Library of Congress

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Picketing the White House

To pressure President Woodrow Wilson to support a constitutional amendment giving women the vote, suffragists from the National Woman's Party became the first people to picket the White House. When they began in the winter of 1917, the public tolerated, even admired, the pickets for their dignity and

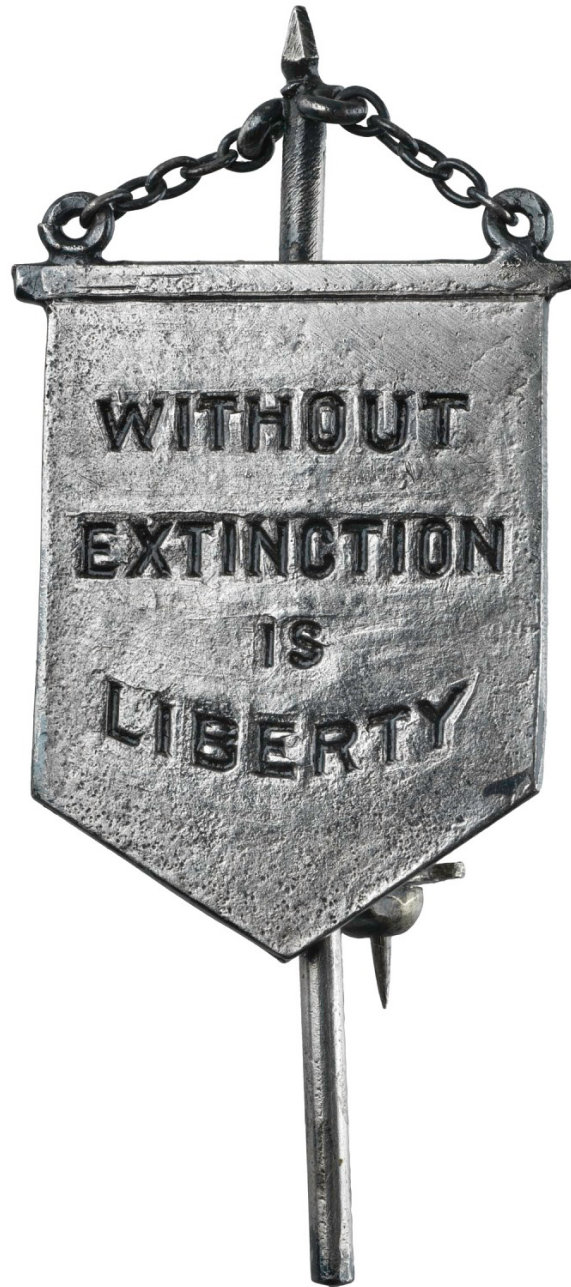
tenacity. When America entered World War I, the picketing seemed unpatriotic and embarrassing to the government. The suffragists were arrested and jailed for obstructing traffic. Reports of abuse and force-feeding and the courage of the imprisoned women generated public sympathy and the pickets were released.

The freed prisoners were honored with silver pins in the shape of prison doors. All of the pickets received silver banner brooches.



Picketing the White House, 1917

Courtesy of Library of Congress <<https://www.loc.gov/item/97500299/>>



Alice Paul's Silent Sentinel pin, 1917
Gift of Alice Paul Centennial Foundation Inc.

[View object record </collections/nmah_1066416>](#)



Alice Paul's Jailed for Freedom pin, 1917
Gift of Alice Paul Centennial Foundation Inc.

[View object record </collections/nmah_1067243>](#)

Hours & Admission

Open every day, except December 25, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Admission is free and no tickets are required.

Location & Contact

1300 Constitution Ave NW,
Washington, DC 20560 <https://www.google.com/maps/place/smithsonian+national+museum+of+american+history/@38.8912835,-77.0322449,17z>

[Contact Information </about/contact>](#)

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